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ABSTRACT

Containing a review of recent research on critical reading and six appendixes detailing course tasks and assignments in an introductory literature course, this essay aims to help teachers develop students' ability to read and write about literature critically. The essay, which focuses on how these course tasks coincide with the findings of recent reading research, defines critical reading and applies the definition to the problem of American teenagers' critical reading of literature, citing findings and suggestions from the works cited. The paper also addresses the benefits of the in-depth study of a significant literary work to students' understanding and enjoyment of the reading. The appendixes comprise the bulk of the document and prescribe class activities designed to complement and enrich students' reading of Hemingway's "A Farewell to Arms." Appendix 1 lists 20 tasks that students must complete in the term; the remaining appendixes spring from these requirements. Appendix 2 provides study questions--to be answered after the first complete reading--that solicit analytical paragraphs about the reading. Appendix 3 requires students to form a thesis statement from a list of specific passages, Appendix 4 contains a sample of a final essay based on this statement, Appendix 5 provides a sample page from a background project assignment list, and Appendix 6 lists bibliographical materials for students. (JD)

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CRITICAL READING FOR CRITICAL WRITING IN THE INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE COURSE

by

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CS 210 132

If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry.

—Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms

THESIS QUESTION

What does it take to read a passage like this one critically and to write about it critically? It takes experience--experience with life and with literature. It also takes a close reading of Hemingway's novel because this "killer world" passage is crucial to possible themes of the novel and to characterization of the narrator and protagonist, Lt. Frederic Henry. Helping my students achieve a close reading is my most basic task.

PREVIEW OF APPENDICES (a partial demonstration of an answer to the thesis question)

To teach critical writing to my freshman in an introduction to fiction course, I have them complete twenty tasks in a ten-week quarter. These tasks, listed in Appendix 1, include having students decide with me which stories to read from the course anthology early in the term. Students also figure out, with my guidance, what reviewers put into fiction reviews for the New York Times Book Review--and how that is different from writing to analyze a work for people who have already read it. This anatomy of a review begins our discussion of audience, style, amount of detail, and a basis of selecting support for the students' own critical essays.

Once we start on Hemingway's novel, students do several tasks aimed at inducing a close reading by drawing from their experience of life and literature and by increasing their vicarious experience of the World War I era. These tasks include answering 34 study guide questions, writing a background research report; discussing six lists of passages for theme, symbolism, or style; viewing a movie of the story, and writing their "definitive" interpretation after much class discussion.

The study questions shown in Appendix 2 solicit analytical paragraphs about the novel as students complete a first reading. For instance, students must analyze characters' claims about love, their views on war, death, pregnancy, and marriage; Catherine Barkley's fear of the rain, and Hemingway's uses of irony. After grading and discussion of these answers to demonstrate what a close reading entails, the class works with six lists of specific passages. One of these lists is shown in Appendix 3. Students work first in groups; then we work as a whole class to form a few possible thesis statements for each list. These thesis statements often form the basis of students' final essays; one sample of a final essay that I use to stimulate discussion of critical writing is shown in Appendix 4.

While students are reading the Hemingway novel and writing answers to the study guide questions as homework, we spend several days in the campus library finding out about the World War I era and about Hemingway. This research leads to written reports by each student and to much livelier and more informed class discussions later in the course. For instance, the medical history topics from which students choose are listed in Appendix 5. These include questions about the risks of Caesarean sections just before 1920, birth control methods available in that era, and treatment of the war wounded. The bibliography of materials

available to students in the Richmond metropolitan area for this topic is given in Appendix 6; those marked with an asterisk are on reserve in the campus library. Each year, of course, this bibliography grows as I add more good sources found by the more enterprising students.

The climax of the course is seeing the movie of A Farewell to Arms. Students' critical awareness is heightened by the liberties in plot and theme taken by the movie-makers. Seeing and discussing the movie causes students yet again to review the novel's plot and, more importantly, to assess again the novel's plausibility, technique, and possible theme.

COURSE TASKS AND RECENT RESEARCH ON CRITICAL READING

Embodied in the 20 tasks of this introduction to fiction course for freshmen are several assumptions, some of which coincide with the findings of recent reading research. Having given an operational answer to my thesis question, I'd like to highlight some of these research findings and link them to various tasks I ask of my students by way of demonstrating how such research can be applied to literature study.

Definitions of critical reading

In their 1977 text, Psychology in Teaching Reading, Emerald Dechant and Henry Smith review and amplify definitions of critical reading. One definition states that people read critically when they use their judgment to assess the quality or truth value of a work. For instance, using research on the methods and risks of giving birth during the World War I era to decide whether Hemingway's depiction of a stillbirth is plausible or not requires critical reading. Another meaning of critical reading involves speculating about an author's biases and purposes, asking why a sentence is phrased just so or why a story incident occurs just so. For instance, one question that inevitably provokes students during class discussion of A Farewell to Arms is why Hemingway would depict his "hero" as being wounded while eating cheese. For another example, one of the six pages listing passages for students to reconsider notes several passages that are different in style from the rest of the novel. Students working with this list have to infer Hemingway's purpose in each passage as well as to analyze the writing style that is "normal" in the novel.

According to Dechant and Smith, people also read critically when they look for fallacious reasoning. Especially when current students see the essays of past students addressing a question they have considered themselves, such as the absurdities and the ironies in the Hemingway story, they see where the insights came from, or where an insight should be; they see how much detail is needed to define a claim and which details, and when quotation is necessary and how to select the appropriate words. In short, when people apply their previous experiences, their learning, and their attitudes to a work, they are reading critically (259-60). When they look at samples of writing that show critical thinking, they can see what it takes to write coherently and persuasively.

American teens' critical reading of lit.

Peter Hasselriis reviews a 1964 study by J.R. Squire on how some American teenagers read four short stories, and he makes some suggestions about how to help students read better. It seems that the narrative form and the students' preconceptions got in their way. They misunderstood or did not even seem to see important words. They overlooked implications of story details and incidents. To get my students to see implications I ask provocative questions to start class discussion of A Farewell to Arms, such as "Who is Catherine Barkley kissing when she's kissing Lt. Henry for the first time?" Several students quickly see that she is pretending to kiss her dead fiance, about whom she feels much guilt. For those

students who don't share this insight, it is necessary to point to the line from Lt. Henry's fantasy about taking Catherine to Milan: "and she can pretend that I'm her dead boyfriend."

Students in the Squire study also made snap judgments or stereotypical responses to questions about the stories. To get my students to see Catherine Barkley as something more than a "doormat," as one student called her, I ask students to tell me why she takes up with Lt. Henry so quickly. This question, after some discussion, pulls together information and attitudes that students mentioned while answering the first few study guide questions. The result is usually that students understand Catherine's and Frederic's motives for getting involved and that students see that each is using the other at first. Later discussions about these lovers' changing motives help students see them as individuals who act according to detectable assumptions and beliefs.

Students in the Squire study were predisposed to like realistic fiction, especially if it had a happy ending or concerned a true-life situation. Part of my reason for using A Farewell to Arms is its relative realism. When we view the movie, however, students do not usually opt for the happy ending tried out by Frank Borsage. When I mention it, students think it ludicrous for Catherine to be revived by the bells ringing to celebrate the Armistice. Concerning true-life situations, it helps students get interested in the novel if they hear that Hemingway was an ambulance driver in World War I and was himself wounded; in fact, a couple of my students have done good analyses of Hemingway's fictionalizing of his experience.

Finally, students in the Squire study often made irrelevant associations to their own personal experiences, to other written fiction, and to stories in other media (39-40). Occasionally, my students will make such irrelevant associations as they answer study guide questions, but general class discussion usually dispels false notions or glib associations. During class discussion I try to contrast Catherine and Frederic with the cardboard characters of television series or TV movies and students generally come to know Catherine and Frederic better than they know prime time characters. Students generally like Catherine and Frederic better than soap opera characters; but sometimes, in order to dislodge a superficial dismissal of a character, a student needs a direct contrast between, say, Catherine's reaction to being pregnant and the reaction of a soap opera heroine.

Helping readers read

After reviewing the Squire study, Hasselriis suggests several actions to help students like those in the study learn more effectively. He suggests having students discuss a fictional work in small groups. I agree that small group discussions of specific topics can be helpful if the groups will be accountable to the class as a whole to report their answers to the questions they addressed or if the group members will be individually responsible for showing the fruits of their discussion in writing. Hasselriis also advocates what he calls "reading and reasoning guides" (41). I agree that study guides which seek only seek recall of details are inappropriate for studying fiction; a study guide should prompt inferences about character, plot, and theme. Hasselriis also advocates providing background information, a purpose for reading, and follow-up discussion and writing (53). Doing background reports can help students experience an era vicariously or understand an author's experiences. Study guides can help students read purposefully; discussion should refine students' insights, and some writing should give students the opportunity to report their own individual analyses of a

fictional work. These notions are obvious to teachers, but students need reminders to see studying, discussing, and writing as part of a natural system for learning to readliterature critically.

Tendencies of less mature readers

More recent studies of immature readers indicate that their reading processes are incomplete or slower than those of mature readers. According to Linda Baker and Ann Brown, less mature readers have more trouble detecting whether or not they understand as they are reading. Having students write out answers to study guide questions lets the teacher monitor the depth of understanding that students are willing and able to report; writing also causes students to check their understanding themselves. Less mature readers are more easily distracted by details and less able to estimate which passages are important. The lists of passages that I give to students concern several motifs or themes in the novel. For instance, I chart Hemingway's gradual broadening of the reference for the pronoun "they" throughout the novel. I also list selected references to light and to darkness, to rain, to comic and ironic events, and to passages that vary in style from the general narrative style of the novel. These lists help focus students' attention on significant passages in the novel and save them considerable rereading. As shown in Appendix 3, the lists should help students formulate a thesis about the novel that concerns theme or symbolism or style. To help students keep track of important details, I also give them a plot summary. The thrust of all this help is that I want to see what my students make out of the evidence rather than to spend valuable time hunting for evidence. The essays that result are less shallow and usually better supported than those written before I used the study guide and the lists. Most important of all, the lists and the discussion that results from them allow even the poorest students in the class to have something to say when it's time to write an essay on the novel.

Baker and Brown also report that if less mature readers have relevant prior knowledge, they are slower to use it for a given task. I assume students know little about World War I. The background reports done in the library help students gain relevant prior knowledge on three dozen topics. Each report answers a specific question that arises from the novel, as shown by the questions in Appendix 5. Students who have seen M*A*S*H or who have had babies themselves have some relevant knowledge of the medical situations in the novel, but these understandings need comparison with the historical facts for treatment of wounded and of Caesarean sections. Class discussion is frequently enriched by the research of students on specific questions. Students become experts for the class when we discuss crucial points, such as whether Catherine and Frederic had access to reliable means of birth control, why the doctor waits so long to take the baby, and how Catherine's work as a nurse's aide both dispelled and reinforced her romantic notions about her fiance.

Less mature readers are slower to see inconsistencies in a work and more reluctant to test their understanding. They are also slower to adjust their understanding through questions to themselves or others, through re-reading or additional study, or through inferences about what they are reading. My major weapon against this reluctance is to grade the study guide answers in two parts so that reluctant students will see that they need to add more detail to their answers to earn a sufficient grade. This realization occurs to many, but not all students increase their effort. Some give up and leave the course. I try to call these students, but they have often reached the point of diminishing returns in my course and are difficult to bring back.

Helping less mature readers

Baker and Brown note that less mature readers can be helped in several easy ways. Simply telling students to keep studying can help them stay on the task and improve their work. Instruction in questioning can help less mature readers to read more actively. Pointing out text structure and what Baker and Brown call "the inherent meanings in certain passages" can also help. Simply telling students to watch for inconsistencies and to evaluate the truth value of statements can get them to do so (43-44). Each of these reminders can be included in study questions. Showing students what kinds of questions to ask trains them to look more closely at fiction. Questioning students on character and plot trains them to ask themselves about character and plot as they read. But training in questioning techniques should also help students to see the differences among questions that solicit details as opposed to those that require inferring what the details mean and to interpret the details of a narrative on the students' own terms.

Fostering better reading

Most recently, Diane Lapp and James Flood, in their article, "Promoting Reading Comprehension: Instruction Which Ensures Continuous Reader Growth," advocate using the language arts to foster proficient text processing. Specifically, they encourage having students use varied response formats, including objective quizzes, short-answer essays, and cloze passages. Like Baker and Brown, they point to the efficacy of using questions to help students move from individual passages to broader inferences and interpretations. In addition, Lapp and Flood urge extending students' strategies for concept formation. That means getting students to see in new ways by having experiences that are new to them. After completing a background research project on Hemingway's early writing career, one of my students remarked: "I'm glad you had me do that project; before I did the research, I thought Hemingway was some guy in a suit and tie who went to an office to write."

Finally, Lapp and Flood argue for involving our students' evaluative skills by working on problem solving (282-87). The background projects present specific problems to be solved by research, usually dealing with plausibility or Hemingway's fictionalizing technique. In addition, considering some thesis statements culled by me from previous students' papers and from literary criticism of A Farewell to Arms gives students several alternatives for making their own definitive statement on the novel.

BENEFITS OF IN-DEPTH STUDY

Students who have trouble revising their first essay, the one on a short story, or their last essay, on A Farewell to Arms, often need to be shown how to support claims. Once they have developed or chosen a thesis, I ask these students which events and which statements by characters they must include to support that thesis. After the study guide, the in-class discussion, the reviews of selected passages, the plot summary, and the movie, it is easier for even the most reluctant students to see the necessity for gathering such support. Most important of all, it is easier for them actually to do the reviewing of the text needed for supporting a thesis. For some students, the final essay of the course may be the first one in their lives for which they have enough to say about a work of fiction and can select the most relevant evidence. Most essays confront the "killer world" passage that serves as the headnote for this presentation. As a result of studying a significant work in depth, this passage resonates with implications even for the students who "never liked literature before."

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Appendix 1: Course Tasks and Selected Objectives

TASK	OBJECTIVE
Unit 1: Short Fiction Introduction	
1. Media Survey.	To detect which students are inexperienced with fiction in any medium and have incomplete story grammars (Indrisano and Gurry 168).
2. Read introduction to New Critical elements of fiction applied to "A Rose for Emily."	To begin distinction between liking and appreciation for fiction.
3. Quiz on "A Rose for Emily."	To check basic plot understanding in a nonchronological story.
4. Each student reads one of the other stories in the anthology to do a one-page recommendation or rejection of it for the class's reading list. (Assigned by preference, then at random.)	To involve students in the reasons for choosing to read a story. To demonstrate taste and the critic's responsibility. To distinguish a first reading for reaction to plot and characters from later readings for symbolism, theme, and style.
5. Read three recommended stories.	To rehearse the elements of fiction and practice applying them.
6. Discuss one or two professional reviews on overhead projector.	To begin analyzing anatomy of a review essay: how they start and end; how they continue and handle plot summary.
7. Students read one review intensively and scan two others from sample copy of The New York Times Book Review.	To give students practice in reading for structure and for style rather than for content, primarily. (To expose students to well written reviews of interesting fiction.)
8. Discussion of reviews.	To assemble a composite anatomy of a review essay for future readers of a work. To practice justifying surmises with quotations from reviews read. To discuss differences between a review essay and a critical essay (for which the audience has read the work concerned).
9. Write essays on one story on class reading list.	To apply anatomy of a review/critical essay.
10. One class reads another's essays (on same story, possibly).	To compare/contrast critical judgments. (revision later, during Unit 2)
Unit 2: Novel--A Farewell to Arms	
11. Answer in writing Study Guide questions 1-17, 18-34, while reading novel.	To point to key passages, incidents, and begin to ask why: character motivation, plot structure, thematic purpose.
12. Discussion of 1-34.	To weigh contrasting interpretations on selected questions. To point to new interpretations. To practice using key lines and incidents to defend answers.

Appendix 1 (continued)

	TASK	OBJECTIVE
13.	(concurrent with #11, which is done as homework) Background research on the WWI era, northern Italy, and Hemingway.	To supplement students' prior knowledge for class discussion of study guide questions. To prepare for written reports. To add vicarious experience and research data to students' strategies for concept formation.
14.	Revise first essay on short story.	To get beyond summarizing as a response to a story. To apply key passage and key incident practice from discussion of novel to revision of short story essay.
15.	Study "Passage Lists" individually and in group discussion.	To build small segments into a web of meaning. To apply symbolism, themes, and style to previous understandings of story to achieve new understandings.
16.	Complete background report.	To apply research to the novel. To practice research format. To write relevant facts and evaluation of novel's presentation of era to fellow students.
17.	Read plot summary.	To review main events and main understandings of novel. To see the whole after dwelling on parts (thematic and symbolic patterns).
18.	See movie (usually 1932 version).	To appreciate Hemingway's realism in contrast with Borsage's Hollywoodization.
19.	Preview thesis statements from professional critics and from previous students.	To reach for a new level of understanding beyond summary, beyond elements of fiction. To see A Farewell to Arms as a personal or cultural document, as a philosophical portrayal of life. To see other patterns of interpretation besides the six studied in #15.
20.	Final essay. (Create drafts either by preplanning or by revising.)	To make an individual, definitive statement on the novel, its meaning, its quality, its reasons for enduring.

ENGLISH 112
STUDY GUIDE FOR A Farewell to Arms

DIRECTIONS: On your own paper answer the questions below while you are reading the novel. Your answers should average about five or six lines per numbered item. The following sample answer may seem long but it's for a four-part question.

Sample #14: Ettore is a gauge to show that Lt. Henry and Catherine view war differently and react to the war with different emotions. Lt. Henry accepts Ettore's bragging about his war exploits and tolerates the parading of his medals. Even though Lt. Henry feels that medals are empty symbols and he himself is quiet about his war experiences, he also believes the army needs men like Ettore—men who glory in war and killing. Catherine sees through Ettore's fraud and his presumptuous attitude and can not accept him. Catherine believes nothing is gained by war.

Analysis: This answer shows that the student infers the characters' attitudes about Ettore Moretti, one of the minor characters in the novel, by what they say or don't say. Her answer shows that she followed Ettore's words and read closely the discussion of Ettore by Lt. Henry and Catherine. It also draws information from other parts of the book, such as in referring to Lt. Henry's attitude about medals which is pointed up in question #19c. She may even be using the plot summary to guess how the scene with Ettore fits in with what happens to Lt. Henry later and with Hemingway's apparent attitude toward war.

Due date for answers 1 through 17 = _____.

Due date for answers 18 through 34 = _____.

ENGLISH 112
A Farewell to Arms
Study Questions: Answer these on your own paper as you first read the story.

1. On pp. 13-14, Lt. Henry explains what he did and did not do on leave. What does he mean on p. 14, lines 3-4, when he says that the priest "had always known what I did not know and what, when I learned it, I was always able to forget"? (See also, p. 13, lines 10-11, "I explained, winefully, how we did not do the things we wanted to do.")

2. a. On p. 18, when Catherine Barkley says to Lt. Frederic Henry, "Do we have to go on and talk this way," what does she mean?
   b. How does their conversation change?

3. On p. 19, when Lt. Henry says he never loved anyone, what does he mean?

4. a. Also on p. 19, why didn't Catherine marry her young man?
   b. What would she have given him if she had known he would die?

5. On p. 20, how are lines 8-10 an example of foreshadowing? (Answer this question after somebody gets wounded later in the book.)

6. On p. 20, is Catherine Barkley still the romantic who imagined her fiance returning to her with a neat and honorable wound or has she changed?

7. Re-read pages 26-27 and page 30. As Catherine yields to Frederic, how do they feel about each other? Why does she yield?

8. a. Considering his comments on pp. 28-29, does Lt. Henry have a cultured view of art?
   b. Why is he in the Italian army? (See p. 22.)
   c. How does Lt. Henry feel about guns? (Remember the rifle in his room and the pistol he carries; see pp. 11 and 29.)
   d. Why is Frederic Henry in the ambulance service instead of a combat unit, like the soldier from Pittsburgh (p. 35)?
   e. In summary, what kind of a man is Frederic Henry, as nearly as you can tell at this point? (See Rinaldi's comment on p. 66: "fire & smoke.")

9. a. On p. 44, why do you think Hemingway has Lt. Henry announce his being wounded just before it happens?
   b. List the absurd things that happen to Lt. Henry starting with his wounding (see pages 56, 58, 61, 63, and others up through 95).
   c. How is Hemingway depicting war at this point?

10. According to Passini (pp. 50-51) and the priest (pp. 70-71), why do wars continue? How are their views different?

11. On pp. 91-93, when Frederic says he loves Catherine, do you believe him? Why or why not?

12. a. On p. 105, why does Catherine want to be lied to?
    b. Is Frederic's lie wrong?
    c. Are Catherine and Frederic in love? (See also p. 106 and the priest's definition of love on p. 72.)

13. What are Catherine and Frederic's reasons for not getting married? (See, for instance, pp. 114-115.) (Later, add in p. 293.)

14. a. After meeting him on pp. 119-124, what do you think of Ettore Moretti?
    b. What does Catherine think of him?
    c. How does Frederic seem to feel about Ettore?
    d. Why might Hemingway introduce such a character at this point?

15. a. On p. 126, why is Catherine afraid of rain?
    b. Catherine says she can keep Frederic safe, but "nobody can help themselves." In view of her St. Anthony medal, is she right about her ability to keep Frederic safe?
    c. Is she right about her inability to help herself stay safe?
    d. What might the rain symbolize? (In view of its importance to Catherine and its pervasiveness in the story, the rain affects the mood of the story and it may mean something about life.)

16. On p. 137, Catherine says, "Life isn't hard to manage when you've nothing to lose." In view of her news at the bottom of the page, what could she mean?

17. a. Is Catherine brave? (For starters, see p. 140. Then note her behavior on 157-158, check the "killer world" foreshadowing on p. 249, and her behavior at the end of the story. Contrast her yielding to Lt. Henry, her fear of rain, and her wanting(?) to be lied to (p. 105).)
    b. What causes or prevents her bravery?

18. Contrast Frederic's dream of taking Catherine to a Milan hotel (pp.37-38) with the reality (pp. 151-154).
    a. Are the motives in his dream the same as the motives for their real visit?
    b. How has his attitude toward Catherine changed?

19. a. On p. 171, Rinaldi observes, "We never learn." What do think you think he means? (See question #1 again.)
    b. What events have made Rinaldi more cynical? (See pp. 174-175.)
    c. On pp. 184-185, what does Lt. Henry mean when he comments on the meaninglessness of abstractions and the dignity of place names?
    d. How is Hemingway depicting depicting war at this point? (Contrast with question #9.)

20. a. On p. 204, why does the Lt. do what he does?
    b. How does he seem to feel about it?

21. List several ironic occurrences during the Italian retreat. (Events are ironic if the unexpected happens or the expected doesn't happen.)

22. On p. 243, Lt. Henry doesn't bother to pick a fight. How has he changed and why since "the old days"?

23. Do you agree with Ferguson's harsh assessment of Catherine on p. 247? Why or why not? (See what she says about his desertion on p. 251.)

24. Review pp. 224-225 and p. 232.
    a. Why did Frederic desert?
    b. How does he feel about it?
    c. How do you feel about it?

25. Lt. Henry's comment about Othello (p. 257) seems designed to diminish our sympathy for him. Why would Hemingway do this diminishing of Henry?

26. Consider Count Greffi's comments on religion on pp. 261 and 263.
    a. What do Catherine and Frederic have as their religion? (See Frederic's comment on the focus of his life near the top of p. 257 and Catherine's near the top of p. 116.)
    b. Could Frederic be devout? (Consider his friendship with the priest, his out-of-body experience on p. 54; contrast his view of the forces that control the world on p. 249.)

27. a. What does Frederic mean when he says, on p. 278, "I've never realized anything before"?
    b. Is he realizing anything now?

28. a. What does Frederic mean on the bottom of p. 284 when he says, "There's no hole in my side"?
    b. Why would Hemingway have Frederic say such a thing? (In what sense are they lost on p. 285? Why would Hemingway have Frederick mention God here?)

29. a. What kind of family life does Frederic hint he's had on p. 304?
    b. In what sense does Catherine want to "ruin" Frederic? (p. 305) Does she succeed?

30. On p. 154, Frederic remembers two lines from Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" (printed in Hall pp. 551-52 - what are the next two lines of the poem?).
    a. What rushes Frederic and Catherine on p. 154?
    b. What different thing hurries them on p. 311?

31. Even today, labor may last up to 20 hours. As you read about the baby's birth, list what things seem believable and what things seem far-fetched about the delivery. Why would Hemingway have Frederic administering gas to Catherine on p. 317, for instance, and pp. 322-323?

32. a. Was Frederic right about life on p. 249? Is he right on pp. 327-328?

33. On p. 331, what's the "dirty trick" Catherine speaks of; how is her attitude different from Frederic's (See question 32)?

34. In summary, what meaning(s) does the title of the book have?

V. THEME--Comic and Tragic Irony

absurdity and irony in A Farewell to Arms

Directions: Below are a few references to absurd or ironic things that happen in the story. What image of life do you see portrayed in these events--cynical, optimistic, joyous, all three, or others?

Page	absurdity	your notes
56	wounded Lt. H. dropped twice	
58	Pres. Wilson's "legitimate son," the Britisher claims	
61	hemorrhaging man bleeds to death in ambulance, above Lt. H., on drive up mountain	
63	medal for Lt. H.	
81	elevator ride in Milan hospital	
84	no doctor at Milan hospital when F.H. arrives	
90	barber mistakes F.H. for an Austrian (enemy) officer	
95	the three incompetent doctors	

Page	irony	your notes
20	"It won't crack here."--Caparetto retreat	
30	game (& p. 31) She knows it's a game and a lie, "a rotten game" (see also p. 18)	
43-44	St. Anthony medal for protection just before wounding	
50-51	Passini speaks loudest against the war and is killed	
155	inconsequential wound supposed to bring Lt. H. back to C.B.(?)	
213-14	Aymo shot by Italian rear guard as German	
218	2 walked through two armies (no danger on the straight and narrow--the railroad track) in plain sight	
222	Lt. H. picked up after rejoining retreat & deserts after shooting sargeant for running out on him	
242	F.H. used to live in Rome & wanted to be an architect	
300	F.H. is not to go away (but Catherine is one who "goes away")	
323	Lt. H. helping to kill Catherine with too much gas? helping to kill baby?	

Follow-up: Can you link the absurdities and the ironies in one view of life? If not, why does H. put those absurd things into a tragedy?

Appendix 4: Sample Student Essay Involving Comic and Tragic Irony in A Farewell to Arms

HOW ABSURD!

War does strange things to people. Its horrible circumstances affect everyone involved adversely. Basic beliefs in ideals are usually lost as they have no bearing on individual survival. For most, survival is the main concern. However, the individual has no control over his own survival; survival depends on chance. Therefore, every human being present during a war must depend on chance and in turn become victim of the absurdity and irony encompassing war.

The characters in A Farewell to Arms are controlled by the happenings around them. Lt. Henry's wounding happens ironically while he is eating instead of when he is in the midst of the fighting. Frederick is then forced into many ridiculous situations during his medical care. From the nightmarish episode with the hemorrhaging soldier to the frightening incompetence of the three hospital doctors, Lt. Henry's feeling of helplessness increases. He realizes he has no power over decisions and occurrences that will affect his life for some time.

However, Frederick's wounding also has an ironically positive outcome. He and Catherine are brought together by it. Furthermore, the time they spend together in the hospital develops their relationship into love, and it is this love that greatly improves the character of the character Lt. Henry.

Soon after the newly vitalized Frederick Henry returns to the front, the troops are forced to retreat. During this retreat, one of the most horrible absurdities occurs - Frederick is forced to desert. If he tries to stay, he will be shot as a traitor and spy. I believe it is in Lt. Henry's forced desertion that Hemingway most forcefully emphasizes the total absurdity of the war.

This frustration is only surpassed by the tragic irony of Catherine's death. After worrying about Frederick being killed throughout the story, in the end it is she who "goes away." Also, the circumstances involved in her death are so absurd that her death is a "dirty trick." The pointlessness of it underlines the absurdity and irony of the war.

After finishing the book, the reader is left with an appreciation of the feelings felt by the people caught in a war situation, which is Hemingway's goal. Because of his skillful writing, the reader experiences the total absurdity and tragic irony of the fighting through the characters. The situation comes alive for him. Therefore, eventhough the reader may have never had any experience of warfare he can attest that "war is hell."

**********Medical History Topics**********

18. How were the wounded treated medically in World War I? What surgical techniques were used most frequently—was it amputation as in the American Civil War? What anesthesias and antiseptics existed? (pictures of instruments? hospitals? aid stations?)
19. Trace how Lt. Henry is treated as a patient after he is wounded (pages 54 through his discharge from the Milan hospital, especially pp. 56-60, 62-75, and 77-88). For what diseases is he treated? What surgical procedures are debated? If possible, find out how this depiction corresponds to the actual procedures and conditions faced by WWI wounded.
20. What was the Italian ambulance service like? How did it differ, say, from today's volunteer rescue squad in personnel, equipment, priority of calls, etc.?
21. What child birth techniques existed in Europe in 1918 (probably before Lamaze and LaBoyer but these doctors had forerunners)? How dangerous was a Caesarian section at this time? What was the survival rate (or mortality rate) for infants and mothers generally compared with today? What anesthesias were used? How long might a labor last? What complications occur late in a pregnancy that threaten the baby and mother? What complications occur after delivery or threatening procedures occurred during delivery? How realistic, therefore, is the depiction of the birth near the end of the novel (which was based on a 1927 delivery)?
22. What birth control techniques and devices existed in the first quarter of this century? What would an informed adult (like a nurse or a soldier)have known about birth control in 1918-1928?
23. What was a V.A.D. in World War I medicine? What do the initials stand for? How is the training program different from that for an L.P.N. (Licensed Practical Nurse)? Judging from her duties in the book and in the movie, what did Catherine Barkley do as a V.A.D.?

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